ULUM

Dini Tetkikler Dergisi
Journal of Religious Inquiries
مجلة الدراسات الدينية

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علوم

The Criticism of Materialism in Late Ottoman's New Science of Kalām [*]

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Abstract

Materialism, which reduces the whole existence simply to matter and its interactions, and respectively ignores the intervention of a divine being concerning the universe; it is often traced back to a period in which philosophy was born. However, when we study the historical process, we find that materialism was a thought that was generally rejected by the majority. With the Enlightenment and secularism following the Renaissance, Reformation and 17th Century Scientific Revolution in Europe, materialism gained more followers. In the 20th century, in what was known as its golden era, it became a world view by manifesting itself in the religious, social, political and economic spheres of life. Materialism came to the Ottomans following the first half of the 19th century through the students who went to the West and via newly established military and medical schools. Despite materialism forming the backbone of debates on

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[*] Previously published in Turkish: Mehmet Bulğen, "Osmanlı Yeni İlm-i Kelâmında Materyalizm Eleştirileri", *Bilimname: Düşünce Platformu* 30/1 (2016): 391-433.

I want to thank Zeliha Uluyurt for her contribution to the translation of the article into English.

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Article Types: Translated Article

Received: 29 June 2019

Accepted: 31 July 2019

Published: 31 July 2019

Cite as: Mehmet Bulğen, "The Criticism of Materialism in Late Ottoman's New Science of Kalām", *ULUM* 2/1 (July 2019): 133-167, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3356845

westernization and secularism (perpetuating worldliness) towards the end of the 19th century, this did not deter many intellectuals from endorsing much of the values that came with materialism, and it led to many repercussions within the political and social realms of the Ottoman world. On the other hand, materialism was not welcomed but rather disapproved of by many Ottoman scholars of *kalām* such as Abdullatif Harputi (1842-1916), İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (1868-1946), Mehmet Şemsettin Günaltay (1883-1961) and Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen (1882-1971). However, their criticism has caused them to break away from the ideas defended by the Islamic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) of the classical period in some respect. We attempt to outline these late Ottoman *scholars*’ critique of materialism and compare their views with the classical *mutakallimūn’s* seemingly materialistic worldview.

Keywords

Kalām, Materialism, Ottomans, Atheism, New Kalām

Osmanlı Yeni İlm-i Kelâmında Materyalizm Eleştirileri

Öz

Bir bütün olarak varlığı madde ve etkileşimlerine indirgeyerek açıklayan, evreni kendisi dışındaki aşkın bir varlığın müdahalesine kapatan bir görüş olarak bilinen materyalizm, ortaya çıkış itibariyle felsefenin başlangıcına kadar gerilere götürülse de, tarihsel süreç içerisinde genelde azınlıkta kalan ve tepkiyle karşılanan bir düşünce olmuştur. Ancak bu görüş Avrupa’da XVII. Yüzyıl bilim devrimi ardından gelen aydınlanma ve sekülerleşme hadiseleri sonrasında yeniden taraftar bulmaya başlamış, XX. yüzyılın başlarına gelindiğinde altın çağını yaşayarak dinî, siyasî, ekonomik ve toplumsal tezahürleri de olan bir dünya görüşü haline gelmiştir. Materyalizmin Osmanlı’ya girişi ise XIX. yüzyılın ilk yarısından itibaren askerî ve tıp alanında açılan modern okullar ile Batı’ya eğitim amaçlı gönderilen öğrenciler vasıtasıyla başlamış; XIX. Yüzyılın sonlarında dünyevileşme, Batılılaşma gibi tartışmalara arka plan oluşturduğu halde önemli sayıda Osmanlı aydınını etkisi altına alarak siyasal ve toplumsal sonuçlara neden olmuştur. Diğer taraftan materyalizm Abdüllatif Harpûtî (1842-1916), İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (1868-1946), M. Şemseddin Günaltay (1883-1961) ve Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen (1882-1971) gibi kelâmcıların da dâhil olduğu birçok Osmanlı ulemâsı tarafından tepkiyle karşılanarak eleştirilmiştir. Makalede söz konusu Osmanlı kelâmcılarının materyalizmi ne şekilde eleştirdikleri ve bu eleştirilerinde materyalistik imâlar taşıdığı söylenen klasik dönem kelâmından birleşip ayrıldıkları noktalar tespit edilmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kelâm, Materyalizm, Osmanlı, Yeni İlm-i Kelâm, Ateizm

INTRODUCTION

Approximately a century-long period from the Rescript of Gülhane (1839) in the Ottoman Empire until the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923) is known as the most intense, painful and long century in the Ottoman history. In this period when there was dynamism and a search not only from military and political aspects, but also in ideational terms, Ottoman intellectuals discussed many issues with the concern of finding a solution to the negative conditions that the Empire had faced.[1] Within these discussion topics, materialism has a special place not only because it is one of the anti-religious thought movements that emerged with the influence of Western thought, but also because it is seen as a prescription of salvation for the troubles experienced by the Ottoman Empire during the collapse period. Western-oriented intellectuals including Beşîr Fuâd (1852-1887), Bahâ Tevfik (1884-1914), Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), Celâl Nuri (1882-1936) and Kılıçzâde Hakkı (1872-1960) claimed that the level of contemporary civilizations would be attained if and only if the Muslim world adopted a materialist worldview, which is some kind of scientism.[2]

On the other hand, the spreading of materialism in the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 19th century brought with it the opposition of the traditionalist and conservative groups, who acted with the intention of defending their religious and cultural values. In this context, one of the groups that criticized materialism included the late Ottoman scholars of *kalām* such as İsmail Hakkı İzmirli (1869-1946), Abdüllatîf Harpûtî (1842-1916), Şehbenderzâde Ahmad Hilmi of Filibe (1865-1914), Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen (1882-1971) and M. Şemseddin Günaltay (1883- 1961).

In this article, I will try to show that the late Ottoman *scholars'* critique of materialism is interesting in two respects. First, linking the science of *kalām* with materialism in a positive or negative sense requires sensitivity and attention because if materialism is to be criticized on the basis of spiritualism or idealism, then we will encounter classical Islamic theologians (*mutakallimūn*). As is known, the classical period (i.e., third-fifth/ninth-eleventh centuries) *kalām* has a character expressed as "seemingly materialist".[3] This is due to the fact that the *kalām* in that period had a cosmology based on atomism, which shaped the worldview

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1 Süleyman Hayri Bolay, *Osmanlılarda Düşünce Hayatı ve Felsefe* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları 2005), 291-292.

2 Aydın Topaloğlu, "Materyalizm", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2003), 28: 140; also see Ahmet İshak Demir, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Aydınlarının İslâm'a Bakışı* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2004), 135 ff.

3 For the phrase "**seemingly materialist"** or **"and even materialist**" ("ve hatta materialist" in Turkish) that Prof. Dr. M. Saim Yeprem uses to describe the general character of the classical period *kalām* see. Şerife Akyol, *Materyalizmin İnsan Anlayışının Modern Çağın İnanç Problemleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi* (Master Thesis, Marmara University, 2002), 10.

of the classical materialism as well.[4] In this context, "seemingly materialism" does not mean materialist but means close to materialism.[5]

The second aspect that made the issue of the criticism of materialism intriguing in the last period of Ottoman *Kalām* is that the struggle against materialism gave rise to the movement of "New Science of *Kalām*" (*Yeni İlm-i Kelâm* in Turkish *and 'Ilm Kalām Jadīd* in Arabic) in the Ottoman State.[6] In other words, the Ottoman State believes that the struggle against modern philosophical currents such as positivism and materialism, which threaten its own existence, can only be achieved by updating the *kalām*. In this context, Islamic Board of Examination and Publication, affiliated with the Ministry of Justice officially assigned Ismail Hakkı İzmirli to write a book that brought the *kalām* up to date.[7] Hence, his work, *The New Science of Kalām*, which he did not succeed to finish, has the distinction of being the last kalām book extant from the Ottoman Empire within a period of more than 600 hundred years.

1. CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Forming a conceptual and historical background before discussing the critics of materialism of the late Ottoman scholars of *kalām* will contribute to a better understanding of the subject. Materialism, derived from the word 'materia', meaning substance in Latin, is the name of the theory which reduces all existing

4 Richard Frank, "Kalām and Philosophy, A Perspective from One Problem", *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. P. Morewedge (Albany: University of New York Press, 1979), 86. It is true that classical Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) generally consider all created things to be material, however, this attitude of them cannot be explained through materialism in the philosophical sense. For *mutakallimūn* accept the existence of a god apart from the universe. Regarding this issue, see. Richard Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf* (Istanbul 1966), 40.

5 This character of the classical period kalām was used by materialists in the last century and sometimes caused exploitation. Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875), in his book entitled *The History of Materialism* (1865), states that the classical period Arabic philosophers made important contributions to materialism. Frederick Albert Lange, *The History of Materialism*, translation to English: Ernest Chester Thomas (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd, 1925), 177. The materialist character of the classical period *kalām* also attracted the attention of Soviet Russia, in the search for a sect complying with communism for the Muslim subjects in the years of cold war. In this context, due to its 'materialistic impressions', Marxist researchers such as Tayyib Tisini, Tawfik Ibrahim Kâmil and Lebanese Hussein Muruwwa had a special interest in *kalām* atomism. Josef van Ess, "60 years after Shlomo Pines's Beitrage and Half a Century Research on Atomism and İslâmic Theology", *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* (Jerusalem: 2002), 21. In the same way, while some proponents of materialism such as Celal Nuri, in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, argued that the religion of Islam was a suitable religion to materialism, they referred to the classical period Islamic theologians. Süleyman Hayrı Bolay, *Türkiye'de Ruhçu ve Maddeci Görüşün Mücadelesi* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1995), 166, 81-82. Bayram Ali Çetinkaya, "Modern Türkiye'nin Felsefi Kökenleri", *Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6/2 (2002): 82.

6 M. Sait Özervarlı, "Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman Period: İzmirli Ismail Hakki's Religious Thought Against Materialist Scientism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 85-88.

7 İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm* (Istanbul: Evkâf-ı İslâmiyye Matbaası, 1339-1341), 1: 17, 90.

things, including spirit, thought, consciousness, to matter and its interactions,[8] or tries to explain reality as a whole through physical processes.[9]

Materialism tries to answer two questions by definition. The first is what the basic elements of the universe are. Materialists respond to this question in a monistic way. Accordingly, the ultimate substance that is present in the basis of everything, and the essential constituent of the universe is matter.[10] The substance does not have any primary quality other than shape, weight, extension and being in continuous motion. The physical and cognitive secondary qualities attributed to such objects such as temperature, coldness, taste, color, sound, consciousness, will, life etc. are not actually existent, but can be explained by reducing them to primary qualities.[11] From this aspect, materialism is separated from spiritualism, which considers the spirit to be the principle present in everything, and from idealism, which regards thought as primary and brings the other beings apart from it to the point of a secondary quality.[12]

The second question that materialism tries to answer is how the universe works. How does such a universe in multiplicity change in an orderly way? Materialism tries to answer this question in a naturalistic way, that is, without resorting to any transcendent being, by explaining the universe only through its own processes. According to materialists, the universe is not the work of any divine will, design, and teleological or final cause.[13] Materialists mostly explain this by regarding the movement or force as the essential quality of matter. Accordingly, an infinite number of atoms in an infinite space collide with each other and then interlock with each other or separate from each other, thereby are in a continuous movement for all eternity. The merging of atoms represents the generation; the separation of them represents the corruption.

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8 Morris T. Keeton, “Materialism”, *The Dictionary of Philosophy,* ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library), 189.

9 A.R. Lacey, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Third edition (New York: Routledge, 1996), 194.

10 Raymond Williams, “Materialism”, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 197.

11 Keith Campbell, “Materialism”, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. Donald M. Borchert (Detroit: Macmillan Thomson & Gale), 6: 6.

12 For example, Ahmed Hilmi of Filibe (1865-1914), one of the late period Ottoman scholars, describes the principles of materialism prevalent in his time as following: 1) There is nothing in the universe except force and matter. Matter and force cannot be destroyed; therefore, they are everlasting and eternal. 2) The nature is administered by its own laws. There is no need to think of a creator because these laws account for the nature and the changes taking place on it, and as is given in the first point because they are everlasting and eternal. 3) Human’s intelligence and consciousness is merely a result of experience, and human does not have an exclusive rank bestowed upon him/her and called mind. 4) Human is a mere natural phenomenon and is not different from other phenomena. Human is also under the influence of the laws of nature having operated necessarily in the same manner that all phenomena are. Therefore, it is revealed that human freedom is no more than a saying. See. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, “Hangi Felsefi Ekolü Kabul Etmeliyiz” (İstanbul: Hikmet Matbaası, 1349/1930), 22; also see. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı İslâmiyye, 1332), 72.

13 According to materialists, any change in the nature is also a result of another material cause. See. William A Dembski, *Being as Communion: A Metaphysics of Information* (United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 56, 57.

As a result, complex entities within the order that we see originate because there is a possibility of a world that is suitable for regular life conditions as we live within the infinite possibilities of generation and corruption.

With its responses to the first and second question, materialism has inherent anti-religious discourse. The monistic aspect, which does not accept a realm of existence apart from material universe, confronts it with divine religions that define the universe as ‘everything that exists rather than God’. The naturalistic aspect, on the other hand, leads to the rejection of such associations such as the creation, mercy, design, purpose, wisdom, the world of examination, salvation and so on that the divine religions use while establishing the God-universe relation.

It is possible to take the first advocates of materialism carrying such atheistic implications back to the pre-Socratic philosophers in history. Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-1875) says that it is “as old as the history of philosophy but not older”.[14] The idea of “everything is water” of Thales (6th century BC), from the Ionian philosophers, is to explain the origin and present state of the universe as a whole with a material being that is at the most fundamental level.[15] However, among the philosophers of antiquity, it was accepted that Leucippus (5th century BC) and Democritus (460-370 BC) were the first proponents of materialism in the real sense by presenting a systematic nature idea based on atomism. These philosophers who want to reconcile the physical phenomena such as the multitude, change and movement observed in the visible world with the principle of the unity and immutability of the Elea School and Parmenides (5th century BC) in the pre-Socratic philosophy, have reduced the existence as a whole to atoms of a certain shape, size and void.[16] According to them, nothing except atoms and void actually exists. If there were no void, movement would not have been possible. Atoms are constantly in motion in this vast gap. In other words, the movement is the natural state of atoms and does not require explanation.[17] Nothing happens by luck; everything happens by a cause necessarily. This necessity is natural and mechanical. This means that any idea of teleological order and purpose is excluded. Nothing comes out of nothing, and something that exists does not go out of existence. All new things are merely a combination of atoms. Atoms are infinite in number and limitless in shape. The atoms that have been in constant motion for all eternity are in chaos with each

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14 Lange, *The History of Materialism*, V.

15 In pre-Socratic philosophy, there was not a clear distinction concerning spirit, body, matter and mind. In this context, material also used to include spiritual elements. For this reason, some historians claimed that Ionian philosophers were not materialist but rather hylozoist. Accordingly, this living being was a matter just as everything was material. Max Jammer, “Materialism”, *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. Wentzel Verde van Huyssteen (New York: MacMillan, 2003), 2: 538.

16 David Furley, *The Greek Cosmologists: The Formation of the Atomic Theory and its Earliest Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1: 115 ff.

17 W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 389 ff.

other. The simple mechanism behind the formation of complex objects is a vortex of atoms that collide with each other.[18]

According to Aristotle (384-322 BC), Democritus did not deny the existence of spirit, but did not make any distinction between the two as a material component. The reason why spirit is superior is that it is made of perfectly smooth atoms in the form of spheres from the kind of temperature and fire.[19] Therefore, according to materialists, the body-spirit distinction is not a problem since there is no difference between atoms of the body and spirit in terms of being made of same matter.[20]

The materialist cosmology of Democritus was attempted to be revived by Epicurus (342-270 BC) in the Hellenistic period. In particular, hedonism made Epicurus one of the most famous materialists in the world history. He intended to establish a system in which materialism was regarded as the only basis for a happy life, free of fictitious beliefs and fears.[21] Later, Roman poet Lucretius (99-55 BC) tried to improve the materialist metaphysics of Epicurus in his long didactic poem *De Rerum Natura*. Lucretius, like Epicurus, used a language to relieve people of the anxiety and fear, which according to him, religions had caused.[22] In this respect, he did not believe that human beings have a spirit beyond the substance to survive after their death.[23]

Although materialism was supported by philosophers such as Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius, it had always been reacted negatively in the Western thought and had remained a marginal theory. For instance, philosophers such as Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC), who had a transcendent element which can be regarded as a god (i.e. Demiurge and Prime Mover respectively) in their philosophical systems, as well as philosophy schools such as the Stoics and Neoplatonists, criticized materialism. During the middle ages, materialism could not find support due to the increase in the effectiveness of divine religions especially like Judaism and Christianity, and its defenders were declared perverse. For example, Dante (1265-1321) sends materialist philosophers such as Democritus and Epicurus to the lowest level of Hell in his *Divine Comedy*. The reason for this is the explanation of spirit through material atoms.[24] As a result, materialism did not become an effective theory in Western thought until the 16th century.

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18 Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. English C. D. Yonge (London: H.G. Bohn Book, 1853), 394-395. According to atomist philosophers, perceived secondary properties like sweetness, bitterness, temperature, coldness, and colors are merely a sum of atoms with primary qualities such as size, shape, mass and non-penetrability. In this way, the characteristics, which are subject to perception, are formed through the influence of the collected atoms on the spirit atoms. Keith Campell, “Materialism”, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2nd edition, ed. Donald M. Borchert (USA: Thomson&Gale, 2005), 6: 7.

19 Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. English R. D. Hicks (New York: Cosimo, 2008), 14-22 (405a 8-13, 406b).

20 H. Meyer, “Materialism”, *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* ed. Janet Halfmann (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2003), 9: 319.

21 Keith Campell, “Materialism”, 6: 8.

22 H. Meyer, “Materialism”, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9: 319.

23 Keith Campell, *ibid.*

24 See. Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, “Dante and Epicurus”, *Comparative Literature* 10/2 (Spring, 1958): 106 ff.

The adventure of materialism in the Islamic world however was different from the West. As is known, Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 235/849)[25], one of the Muʿtazilite theologians, refined atomism that had been associated with materialism until then and brought it into theism.[26] In contrast to Jewish and Christian theologians who regarded the theory as deviant, atomism in the hands of the classical Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) became occasionalism, one of the most lusty theories on God-universe relationship.[27] In the Islamic world, atomism did not remain a marginal theory as in the Western thought, rather it became a dominant model of universe within the 10-12th centuries.[28]

Undoubtedly, to bring such a materialist theory (i.e., atomism) to theism should be regarded as the success of the *mutakallimūn*. In fact, this is a success corresponding to the fact that the theory of evolution, which is used in opposition to theism by materialists nowadays, is put into the service of theism through a change process. But the *mutakallimūn* had to pay a price to make atomism fit theism. Accordingly, the universe as a whole, including the angels and the soul, is composed of material substances or indivisible particles (*al-juz' alladhī lā yatajazza',* i.e., atom) that occupy space. Human characteristics such as thought, knowledge, will, consciousness and life are regarded as accidents (*a'rāḍ*) carried by the material atoms that make up the brain or heart. It is impossible for such qualities to exist without attaching to a material substratum [which refer to the space occupying indivisible particles].[29]

However, it is also a fact that such “seemingly materialist” view, which was present in the classical period, began to lose its influence in the period after al-Ghazālī (d. 505-1111) (*muta'akhkhirūn* or post classical period). The main reason for this is that the concept of spiritual (*rūḥānī*) or abstract (*mujarrad*) substance (*jawhar*) is accepted by the Muslim theologians in the post classical period.[30] For example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) is of the opinion that human beings are composed of space-occupying (*mutaḥayyiz*)

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25 For his life and works, see. Metin Yurdagür, “Ebü'l-Hüzeyl el-Allâf”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1994), 10: 330-332.

26 Otto Pretzl, “Erken Dönem İslâm'ın Atom Öğretisi”, translated from German Bilal Kır, *KADER: Kelam Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 13/1 (2015): 561 ff.

27 Duncan B. Macdonald, “Klasik Dönem Kelâmında Atomcu Zaman Ve Sürekli Yeniden Yaratma”, translated from English Mehmet Bulğen, *Kelâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 14/1 (2016): 279 ff.

28 Alnoor Dhanani, “İslâm Düşüncesinde Atomculuk”, translated from English. Mehmet Bulğen, *KADER: Kelâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 9/1 (2011), 393 ff.

29 For example, Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935-36), who accepts that the universe is made up of indivisible substances and accidents, claims that soul is a subtle body (*jism latīf*) belonging to the species of breath and air. He also counts such elements as life, will and knowledge as accident (‘*araḍ*). According to him, when air moves rapidly it becomes wind (*rīḥ*), and when it enters the lungs it becomes what we know as the soul (*rūḥ*). Therefore, the soul does not mean life, because life is an accident. Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī,* ed. Daniel Gimert (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1987), 267, 271.

30 Al-Ghazalī adopted the dualist human concept assuming that the abstract soul is the essence of human and the material body is the instrument of him. See. al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa-Filozofların Tutarsızlığı*, text and trans. Mahmut Kaya and Hüseyin Sarıoğlu (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2005), 219.

substances and spiritual substance that is non-extended. In this context, he explains such characteristics of man as thought, will and consciousness in proportion to the immaterial spirit.[31]

Going back to the adventure of materialism in Western thought again, materialism was a theory that gained importance in the West as much as it fell into disfavor in the Islamic world. The change of cosmological paradigm in the 17th-century science revolution in Europe pushed Western scholars to quest philosophies of nature, alternative to Aristotle. In this context, philosophers such as Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), and Daniel Sennert (1572-1637) again took an interest in ancient atomist views.[32] Pierre Gassendi (1592-1955), a priest in Paris and also an astronomy teacher at the Royal College, tried to revive Epicureanism as an alternative to the Aristotelian universe understanding. But while doing so, he claimed that atoms were created and not eternal. Thus, he reconciled the atomistic natural philosophy of Epicure with the belief of creation of Christianity. Gassendi's materialism includes the field of psychology as well as physics, and claims that all events in the world take place with the organization of atoms.[33] However, his metaphysics -because he admits the existence of a God of creativity and ingenuity- is not materialist, but 'seemingly materialist', as it is in the Muslim theologians of the classical period. In this direction, it is possible to consider Gassendi to be Abū al-Hudhayl of the Christian world.

Although Gassendi had given faithful scientists such as Galileo (1564 –1642), Newton (1642 –1726) a ground to adopt atomism[34], he confronted Descartes (1596-1650), who defended the dualist human view.[35] Descartes on the one hand accepted the materialist character of the inanimate world, even the plants and animals, and on the other hand, he conceded that besides his material body, a human being has an immortal and immaterial spirit possessing features like consciousness, and thought. Thus, the philosophy of Descartes says that the universe is composed of two basic elements, as in the view of the *mutakallimūn* of the post classical period: material/spatial substance that forms the body and the spiritual/non-extended one representing the thought. These two come together in a mysterious way in human beings.[36]

In the 18th century, with the effect of Newtonian mechanics, the spread of deism created a preliminary preparation for materialism. In fact, Newton himself, as a faithful Christian, argued that God

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31 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Ma'ālim fi Uṣūl al-Din*, ed. Samih Dughaym (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1992), 26.

32 Robert H. Kargon, "Atomism in the Seventeenth Centurty", *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip Wiener (USA: Charles Scribner's Sons 1973), 1: 132 ff; John Henry, "Matter", *Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution,* ed. Wilbur Applebaum (New York, London: 2000), 621.

33 Lauge Olaf Nielsen, "A Seventeenth-Century Physician on God and Atoms", *Memory of Jan Pinborg,* ed. Norman Kretzman and Jan Pinborg (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 297-369.

34 Lynn Sumida Joy, *Gassendi the Atomist: Advocate of History in an Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 180.

35 Margaret J. Osler, "Divine Will and The Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity", *The Created World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 180.

36 Keith Campell, "Materialism", 6: 8,9.

not only created the universe, but also still preserved its order.[37] On the other hand, the theories of motion that he developed meant that the universe as a whole worked mechanically in a mathematical order. In this context, Newtonian mechanics created a background for the spread of deism in Europe. While deism has an understanding of God that creates the universe or saves it from chaos, but it tries to leave the universe on its own in the next/following process. However, this does not mean that all mechanists are materialist. While for Diderot (1713 - 1784), Voltaire (1694 - 1778) and Frederick the Great (1712 - 1786), the mechanical universe thought leads to materialism and atheism, for Leibniz (1646 –1716), Shaftesbury (1671 - 1713), J.G. Herder (1744 - 1803) and Goethe (1749-1832), the mechanical and mathematical explanation of the universe does not lead human to atheism.[38]

If we take a closer look at the materialists of the era who will also influence the Ottomans, undoubtedly the most famous materialist of the century is Baron d’Holbach (1723 - 1789) who is a French nobleman, living in Paris. His book, *Systeme de la nature* (1770), which is considered to be the “gospel of materialism”, has an entirely anti-religious discourse. In his book, Holbach declares that nothing can be left out of nature. This indicated that there was no God outside of the material universe as divine religions claim. Nature is continuous and events occur in consecutive causal determinations. The matter is always there, and it is always in motion. Different worlds are made up of different distributions of matter and movement. Everything existing can be explained in a determined way within the context of the laws of matter and motion. Therefore, there is no God who gives order and purpose beyond the universe. Although perception may seem to be a different feature of matter, in reality it is a special form of movement. Man is a purely physical being. According to Baron d’Holbach, one can take their own future into their own hands by getting rid of illusions. He can establish his own happiness. Humans should put aside immortality, God, faith and future anxiety so that they should pave the way for their own natural development. For religion detaches people from nature and real life.[39]

In the 19th century, the success of natural sciences with the technological advancements helped spread materialism throughout Europe. Positivism and utilitarianism, emerging in France and England, also the development of living conditions with the industrial revolution and discoveries in the field of physics (e.g. the law of conservation of energy), and new findings concerning the inorganic and organic transformations were effective in this. In this context, physicians and biologists, such as Karl Vogt (1817 - 95), Jokob Moleschott (1822-93) and Louis Büchner (1824 - 99), became the spokesman of the evolutionist materialist philosophy called “vulgar materialism.”[40]

Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882) published the book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, and *The Descent of Man* in 1871. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825 - 1895), in 1863, published *Man’s Place in Nature*. It is stated that these

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37 The discussion between Newton and Leibniz on this issue is well-known. See. Hylarie Kochiras, *Force, Matter, and Metaphysics in Newton's Natural Philosophy* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of North Carolina, Capel Hill 2008), 107.

38 H. Meyer, “Materialism”, 9: 320.

39 Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *The system of nature: or, The laws of the moral and physical World*, Tr. from the French of M. Mirabaud, (University of Michigan 1795), 19, 79 ff; Keith Campell, “Materialism”, 6/11.

40 H. Meyer, “Materialism”, 9: 320.

three studies provide an experimentally supported background for the main thesis of the vulgar materialism. This thesis is that living beings assume certain forms without the effect of a transcendental cause, rather their forms are defined by the environment they live in, and accordingly, human as a whole is a part of the natural world.[41]

David Friedrich Strauss (1808 - 1874) and Ernst Haeckel (1834 - 1919) as practitioners of Darwin's principles became well-known advocates of the materialist movement. Strauss Hegelian, as a radical Bible critic, also made the transition from idealism to materialism.[42] According to him, new developments in biology require reinterpretation of nature as a whole. For Strauss, there is no fundamental difference between living and non-living beings; life is a kind of mechanism although it is only slightly complicated. According to Darwin's natural selection principles, the best survives and little mutations occur over time. In this context, one can show how it came into current state if he traces back from the present richness of species. Man arose not from the hands of God, but from the depths of nature. His initial state is not a fall from the highest status in the heaven in which he was extracted, but is climbing up from the animalism through an evolution process. There is no place for a supernatural God, a universe of souls, and a distinction between the spirit and body.[43]

Haeckel's thoughts were similar to those of Strauss. He tried to give a philosophical position to Darwinism. Haeckel's theory of matter is, in summary, based on the view of infinite matter that does not change in a continuous movement in infinite space and time. According to him, the formation of living things in the world, including man, is part of the general evolution in the universe.[44] After carbon appears on the surface, organic life begins. Spiritual characteristics of human are also tied to the laws of matter and are shaped by chemical changes. Haeckel opposed the fact that the human soul had a structure beyond substance and thus making a fundamental distinction between animal and human. He regarded the gradual development of that human from lower backbone animals as a great victory.[45]

Besides such examples of evolutionary materialism, the other field in which materialism developed in Europe in the 19th century was the "dialectical materialism" led by Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820 - 1895). This view, which saw the history as a scene where economic aspect of man is the

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41 Vulgar materialism underlines human's naturalist nature that is independent of history and culture, and completely reduces human's mental and phycological characteristics to the physiological processes of brain. Vulgar materialism, which was regarded within the European science circles, in the period when it emerged, as being far from intellectual and philosophical depth, and which was described as simple, rough and common, concludes from the postulate that thought is an organic product of brain that it is an absolute organic determination of social ideas. This means that when the organisms of an individual are changed, his/her political and religious ideas may also change. Regarding this issue see. Keith Campell, "Materialism", 6: 10.

42 For example, see. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*, trans: Marian Evans (New York: C. Blanchard, 1860), 1: 27 ff.

43 H. Meyer, "Materialism", 9: 320-321.

44 Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation*, trans. E. Ray Lankester (EBook: Release Date: August 14, 2012), 1: 4 ff.

45 H. Meyer, "Materialism", 9: 321.

primary determinant, was actually the result of the unification of the materialism of Feuerbach (1804 - 1872) and the dialectic of Hegel (1770 - 1831).[46] According to Marx and Engels, the material universe perceived by the senses has an objective reality independent of the spirit and the mind. Although they do not deny the existence of mental and moral processes, they argue that ideas only emerge as a reflection of material situations. For this reason, Marx and Engels's materialism is opposed to idealism and spiritualism, which claim that matter is dependent on the mind or the spirit.[47]

2. INTRODUCTION AND PROLIFERATION OF MATERIALISM TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In fact, materialism, a product of Western thought, had the opportunity to spread in many countries in the 19th century and also influenced the Ottoman Empire, which had an intense relationship with Europe. The first introduction of materialism to the Ottomans and its subsequent widespread among the intellectuals covers a period that spans nearly a century. After the Rescript of Tanzimat (1838), this view, which is more or less evident in the field of literature, is argued to have begun to exert its influence towards the end of the 19th century and completed its entrance to the Ottoman state after the proclamation of the second constitutional period (1908).[48]

The first confrontation of the Ottoman culture with materialism can be traced back to the end of the 18th century. The Ottoman intelligentsia who went to Europe, particularly to France, had the opportunity to meet closely the ideas of the 18th-century French materialists such as Denis Diderot (1713 - 1784), Baron d'Holbach (1723 - 1789) and Pierre Cabanis (1757 - 1808). In addition to the students who were sent abroad, the educational institutions, opened in European style played a significant role in the entry of materialism into the Ottoman Empire such as Ottoman Medical School (1839), Ottoman Military School (1834) and Galatasaray Sultani (1868).[49] Among these schools, especially Ottoman Medical School’s role in the settling and spreading of materialism in the Ottoman Empire is great.[50] For example, the British historian and traveler Charles Macfarlane (1799 - 1858) states that a completely materialistic education was given at the Ottoman Medical School in his notes he compiled from his visit from 1847 to 1848 to find out about the Ottoman Empire.[51]

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46 Historical materialism as an extension of dialectic materialism applies the principles of dialectic materialism to the events of community life, society and the studies on society. See. J. Stalin, *Diyalektik ve Tarihsel Materyalizm* (Bilim ve Sosyalizm Yayınları, Eylül 1979), 9.

47 Engels describes this situation as follows: “The only truth is the sensible material world, on which we are present. Our consciousness and thoughts, however they seem supra-sensuous, are products of a material and bodily organ, that is brain. Matter is not a product of spirit; conversely, spirit itself is nothing more than the highest product of matter. Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, 1: 302, 329; J. Stalin, *Diyalektik ve Tarihsel Materyalizm*, 23, 24.

48 On this issue see. Mehmet Akgün, *Türkiye’de Klasik Materyalizmin Eleştirileri* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları. 2007), 9.

49 Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2014), 11 ff.

50 Süleyman Hayri Bolay, *Osmanlılarda Düşünce Hayatı ve Felsefe*, 290.

51 Macfarlane recounts what he saw in a meeting he was invited during his Mekteb-i Tıbbiye trip as follows: “I was invited in an excellently furnished saloon that is allocated for doctors and Turkish assistants. There was a book on the sofa. I took it and looked at it. This was the last Paris edition of Baron d’Holbach’s book of irreligiousness, *Systeme*

When we look at the general character of Ottoman materialism, it has not been a movement of thought discussed in just an intellectual course as is the case with the struggle between realism-idealism or materialism-spiritualism in the West. Moreover, it has formed a background to the contexts of such higher discussions as westernization and being contemporary on the rescue of the Empire, which was collapsed in terms of the military, politics and finance.[52] In other words, materialism was seen as an important civilization, education and modernization project rather than a philosophical movement in the Ottoman state.[53]

Another feature of Ottoman materialism is that rather than the dialectical materialism led by Karl Marx and Engels,[54] it developed under the influence of the positivist and evolutionist "vulgar materialism" that scholars such as Ludwing Buchner and Ernst Heackel pioneered.[55] The transfer of the theory to the social sphere was mostly through the British Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903) and the Frenchman Gustave Le Bon (1841 - 1931).[56]

Louis Büchner is worth stressing among these names. His work *Matter and Force* (*Kraft und Stoff* - 1855), which was published in Germany, has 21 editions and has been translated into 17 languages, including Ottoman. The main thesis of this book, which is the focal point of the discussions of materialism in the Ottoman Empire, is the claim, without any creative god idea, that there can be no force without matter and

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de La Nature. I deduced from the many marks on its pages that this book was read extensively. These marked places were the parts show the absurdity of believing in God and the impossibility of the belief of the imperishability of the spirit through mathematics. Just as I was putting the book back, one of the Turkish doctors came near me and said the followings in French: "C'est un grand ouvrage! C'est un grand Philosophe! il a toujo-urs reison!". See Murtaza Korlaelçi, *Pozitivizmin Türkiye'ye Girisi* (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2002), 198. Macfarlane could not hide his astonishment when he saw that almost all the books that had prepared the French Revolution were being read in Mekteb-i Tıbbiyye. He says about the library of this faculty: "I had not seen a collection gathering sheer materialism books for a long time. A young Turkish, seated, was reading the handbook of irreligiousness, that is, *Systéme de la Nature*. Another student was showing his skills as he was reading some passages from *Jacques le Fatalisme* and *Le Compére Mathieu* of Diderot. *Rapposts du Physique et du Moral de L'Homme* of Cabanis was noticeably placed on the shelves." Charles Mac Farlane, *Constantinople in 1828*, 5: 163-165; Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* (İstanbul: YKY, 2002), 232.

52 Meral Yıldırım, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Aydınlarının Materyalizme Dair Eleştirileri* (Master Thesis, Marmara University 2004), 3.

53 Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 11.

54 Şerife Akyol, *Materyalizmin İnsan Anlayışının Modern Çağın İnanç Problemleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi"* (Master Thesis, Marmara University, 2002), 32.

55 The entrance of classical materialism to the Ottoman Empire falls on the last quarter of the 19th century, however, dialectical materialism entered after 1919 and had a very limited effect. See. Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi,* 12, 50.

56 Regarding the effect of biological materialism that emerged by the influence of Darwinizm on the Ottoman intelligentsia, see. Atilla Doğan, *Sosyal Darwinizm ve Osmanlı Aydınları Üzerindeki Etkileri (1860- 1916)*, (Doctoral Thesis, Marmara University, 2003), 165-315.

vice versa. According to Büchner, who argues that his writings were entirely based on experimental science, matter and force are in fact two distinct manifestations of the same being and are not different from each other. Even between the smallest particles, there is a pulling and pushing force. Movement is the inherent quality of the material. The matter is in constant motion in its smallest parts.[57] Büchner also objected to the idea that man has an immortal spirit, which is independent of his material body. For him, there is basically no difference between living and non-living beings, except that one [of them] is more complex. Büchner, who claimed that the difference between human and other life forms was not "qualitative" but "quantitative", argued that emotions and thoughts were a kind of electrical impulses shaped by consistent examples of the human nervous system. Similarly, he argued that organic life evolved from an inorganic substance/matter.[58]

Although the vulgar materialism led by Louis Büchner was labeled as “rough”, “popular”, “away from the depth” in European intellectual spaces,[59] it was accepted as the ultimate worldview whose accuracy is undisputed by the Westernist Ottoman intellectuals. This situation led to the alienation of the Ottoman intelligentsia from its own tradition of thought and caused them to disengage from other philosophical traditions of Western thought.[60] Probably the reason why vulgar materialism was accepted to this extent in the Ottoman Empire was its claim to explain the process from the formation of the universe to the emergence of the first living thing and from the emergence of the human to the development of the most civilized societies. This seemed to present the rules for progression and doing away with backwardness in that period, which was the most important problem of the Ottoman Empire.[61]

Among those who helped develop and expand materialism in the Ottoman Empire, the names such as Abdullah Cevdet, Beşîr Fuâd, Bahâ Tevfik and Celâl Nuri can be mentioned. These names have tried to spread materialism in Ottoman [lands] by means of secret and open associations they established, newspapers and

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57 Louis Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, trans. Baha Tevfik-Ahmed Nebil, (İstanbul: Müşterekü’l-menfa’a Osmanlı Şirketi Matba’ası, [t.y.]), 1: 12

58 Louis Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 3: 499 ff.

59 On this issue see. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, “Felsefesiz Bir Toplumun Felsefe Olmayan Felsefesinin İlmihali: Madde ve Kuvvet”, in Louis Büchner, *Mâdde ve Kuvvet*, ed. Kemal Kahramanoğlu, Ali Utku (İstanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2012), 24.

60 Atilla Doğan, “Son Dönem Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Yeni Etik Arayışları”, 2. *Siyasette ve Yönetimde Etik Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı* (Sakarya, 2005), 398.

61 According to Şükrü Hanioğlu there are three reasons why vulgar materialism became “high philosophy” within the Ottoman intellectual milieu and why *Matter and Force* regarded as the holy book of this thought system: “Disputes pertaining to the religion-science conflict in the intellectual milieux were spreading and this was considered as the main determinant of history. For this reason, in the Ottoman lands, vulgar materialism perceived as a doctrine that ensures the ultimate victory of science against religion. 2) Vulgar materialism was assumed as the motive force of the development in the West. 3) It was accepted as the common denominator of all systems criticizing religion and thinking that the era of religion has come to an end. See. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, “Felsefesiz Bir Toplumun Felsefe olmayan Felsefesinin İlmihali”, 27.

magazines, translation and copyright works they published.[62] Although they differ from each other in details, rather than using a method against religion in the first place, they aimed at spreading materialism under the name of clarifying the religion of Islam from the innovations and purifying it from superstitions.[63] In their view, the conciliation of materialist ideas with religion meant the easy adoption of materialism by society, and at least, decreasing the backlash against them in a religious society. For this reason, Ottoman materialists in the works they wrote claimed that Islam, the last and the absolute religion, is a religion in accordance with science and materialism. They also stated that aspects that are contradictory with materialism shown up in consequence of the innovations and superstitions included by exegetists (*tafsīr* and *ḥadith)* scholars, who misinterpreted the Qur'an, in the historical process.[64] They say on the one hand that the religion of Islam gives importance to the use of science and scientific research. On the other hand, they argue that the theory of evolution and the idea of matter and force being eternal is the definitive knowledge revealed by the latest developments in science. For this reason, there is no possibility that the religion of Islam is against the truth of materialism.[65] For example, when Bahâ Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil translated Büchner's (1824-1899) *Matter and Force*, in their presentation script, entitled "Our Words", they stated that the religion which was targeted in this book was Christianity that lost its originality but not Islam.[66]

On the one hand, the materialists emphasized that Islam fundamentally corresponds to materialism, and on the other hand, they tried to give meanings suitable to their own line to the beliefs and values adopted by the general population such as the principle of monotheism (*tawḥīd*), creating out of nothing and afterlife.[67] For example, if we take a closer look at Celal Nuri's views, he is criticizing the evidence of the temporal origination (*ḥuduth*) argument of classical *mutakallimūn* on the creation of the universe. According

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[62] Beşîr Fuâd with his books *Viktor Hügo* (İstanbul 1302), *Beşer* (İstanbul 1303), *Volter* (İstanbul 1304) ve *İntikâd* (İstanbul 1304) and with his several articles; Baha Tevfik with these various translations and his writings on *Felsefe Mecmuası*; Celâl Nuri (İleri) especially with his book *Tarih-i İstikbâl* (I-III. istanbul 1331-1332) and with his varied translations and publications; Abdullah Cevdet with his physiology and biology themed materialist writings in the journal named *İçtihad*; Tevfik Fikret with his poem named *Tarih-i Kadim* (İstanbull321). See. Aydın Topaloğlu, "Materyalizm", 28: 140.

[63] Ahmet İshak Demir, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Aydınlarının İslâm'a Bakışı*, 135. Also see. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Abdullah Cevdet", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988), 1: 90-93.

[64] Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti,* 10, 11, 28, 136.

[65] On the claims that Islam religion and materialism are congruous with each other, which are made by Ottoman materialist Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi says the following: "To claim that there is a significant principle in materialism that conforms with the spirit of Islam is an absurd idea. Even Büchner's soul, if he has one, cannot restrain itself from smiling towards this courageous student's claim. An infidelity path that belittles the Necessary Being with a so-called name like insoluble, or "unknowable", and that is nothing more than the denial of spirit and God and whose these characteristics have been never denied by its defenders, as well as an assertion that there is an important compatibility between infidelity and religion are tawdry claims. See. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi*, ibid.* 33.

[66] Louis Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 4.

[67] Rahmi Karakuş, *Felsefe Serüvenimiz* (İstanbul: Seyran Yayınları, 1995), 194.

to him, accepting that the universe is formed suddenly is, in one sense, breaking the relationship of God, who is the essence of the force, with the universe. For the essential thing in being is continuity. Celal Nuri thinks that matter existed before this world, but that we cannot know this with our current scientific level yet.[68]

He also criticizes the methods theologians use to prove that the world has been created depending on the claim that the accidents (*a'rāḍ*) are temporally generated. According to Celal Nuri, the fact that movement turns into rest, darkness turns into light; white becomes black and vice versa for all does not mean that the world has been temporally created. To him, 'change' or 'transformation' in existence does not mean "creation". Force is the transformation of existence from one nature to another by evolution and change, and the matter is also like this. [69]

Unlike *mutakallimūn* argue, Celal Nuri claims that it is not possible to observe the creation of any power out of nothing with our senses. Matter and force can transform from one form to another through evolution and change. Existents were not generated in time quite the contrary, they exist by themselves. All events are liable to eternal causes and immutable laws.[70] According to him, influenced by hadith scholars, *mutakallimūn* had a strange interpretation of "the creation out of nothing" since they did not understand the origin and creation (*takwīn*). However, *takwīn* means that matter and force by changing shape caused the formation of the present universe. Or else, it does not mean that the universe did not exist before; the matter and force were also absent, but then everything came into being out of blue."[71]

3. THE FIGHT AGAINST MATERIALISM IN THE OTTOMAN STATE AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW SCIENCE OF KALĀM

Contemporary studies which approach the discussions of materialism in the Ottoman Empire in a systematic way, often try to reduce the issue to the discussion of materialism and spiritualism.[72] However, examined closely, it will be realized that this type of classification is not appropriate. Although it is true that movements such as materialism, positivism, and Darwinism are from the West, on the other hand, the first reactions to materialism are not emerged by the influence of the spiritualist or idealist movements in the West, but rather derived from the traditional thought currents already present in the Ottoman Empire

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[68] Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i İstikbal* (İstanbul: Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, 1936), 39-40. Also see. Hatice Çöpel, *Celal Nuri İleri'nin Din Anlayışı* (Master Thesis, Selçuk University, 2010), 13, 74

[69] Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i İstikbal,* 113.

[70] Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i İstikbal,* 40.

[71] Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i İstikbal,* 111.

[72] For example, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, in his article titled "Kitap Hakkında", which he wrote on Süleyman Hayri Bolay's *Türkiye'de Ruhçu ve Maddeci Görüşün Mücadelesi*, states that the first noticeable one among the vivid intellectual movements after the Second Constitutional Era [1908] is the conflict between Materialism and Spiritualism. While Ülken mentions Baha Tevfik and his friends Celal Nuri, partially Abdullah Cevdet on the Materialist side, he counts Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Efendi, İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, İsmail Fennî in the Spiritualist side.

depending on the religious motives.[73] In this context, the Sufism, *kalām* and other branches of Islamic thought have tried to extinguish the emerging fire in their own ways. For example, while the criticism of Mehmet Ali Ayni (1868-1945) and İsmail Fennî Ertuğrul (1855-1946) against materialism were more sufism-oriented, Abdullatif Harputî (1842-1914), Shaykh al-Islām Mûsâ Kâzım Efendi (1858-1920), İsmail Hakkı İzmirli (1869, Shaykh al-Islām Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1956), Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen (1882-1971) and M. Şerafeddin Yaltkaya (1879-1947) criticized it on the axis of *kalām*. Ahmed Hilmi of Filibe (1865-1914), although he adopted the view of The Unity of Being (*Waḥdat al-Wujūd*), he fought against materialism with *mutakallimūn's* method.[74]

In addition to these names in the *sūfī* and *kalām* tradition, the materialism in the Ottoman Empire was criticized by many intellectuals including Hacı Mustafa (*Red ve Isbat*, Istanbul, 1330), İsmail Ferîd (*İbtâl-i Mezheb-i Mâddiyûn*, İzmir 1312), Ahmed Midhat (B*en Neyim: Hikmet-i Maddiyyeye Müdafaa*, İstanbul 1308), Emin Feyzi (*ilim ve İrâde*, İstanbul 1343), Halid Edip (*Mâddiyûn'a Reddiye*, İstanbul 1334), Babanzâde Ahmed Naîm (*Hikmet Dersleri*, İstanbul 1329), with their writings in the newspaper *Ulûm*, Ali Suâvi (1839-1878) and Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924). However, the rise of materialism in the Ottoman Empire could not be prevented, especially after the Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908), the problem has reached significant dimensions. This situation led the Ottoman scholars to seek ways to combat materialism more systematically. Undoubtedly, at this point, eyes have been casted over the science of *kalām*, which historically undertook the duty of defending the religion of Islam against other systems of religion and thought. However, the current state of *kalām* science at the time was not considered to be able to fight against these modern infidel movements.[75] This led the Ottoman scholars to think the science of *kalām* should be revised in accordance with the needs of the current era. In order to revise this science, it is emphasized that first of all the philosophers should know the philosophical and scientific views of the age. For example, Mûsâ Kâzım Efendi (1858s-1920), among the late period Ottoman Shaykh al-Islāms, expressed this point as follows:

"Today, our opponents, that is philosophers, do not accept the godhood and prophethood. Some people among the naturalists have accepted the godhood, but when we analyze it in depth, it appears that what they call "God" is indeed nature. In this case, the direction we need take is to compile the books of *kalām* in accordance with today's needs. How can this happen? Once, we should know the opinions of the people in opposition to us. If it is not known, we cannot speak against them."[76]

Shaykh al-Islām Mûsâ Kâzım Efendi tries to base his opinion on the example of the *mutakallimūn* of the early period who studied the sciences of philosophers of their time while refuting the criticisms against Islam and then silenced them with their own words. According to him, if Islam is advocated with sciences that do not have a standing at the moment, it will be absurd. Therefore, first of all, modern sciences should be studied and then, in the framework of the principles of sciences, Islam should be defended. "The works

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[73] Neşet Doku, *Türkiye'de Anti-Materyalist Felsefe* (İstanbul: Umut Matbaacılık, 1996), 12.

[74] On this issue see. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti,* 146.

[75] M. Sait Özervarlı, *Kelâm'da Yenilik Arayışları* (İstanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 1998), 46.

[76] Musa Kazım Efendi, *Külliyât; Dini, İctimai Makaleler* (İstanbul: Evkaf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası 1336), 292-293.

show that the theologians have done so in all centuries. All scholars wrote books in line with the needs of each century”.[77]

Abdüllatif Harpûtî[78], one of the late Ottoman theologians, says that when he was assigned to teach theology in Dârü’l-funûn, he was looking for a book that opposed the contemporary non-believers who rejected the principles of Islam but he could not come across such a book that belongs to the classical period Ahl al-Sunnah *mutakallimūn* . In this direction, he explains the reason for writing his book *Tankîh al-kalâm:*

“The books of them [classical *mutakallimūn*] were limited to the rejection of the innovations (*bid‘ah*) of the deviant Islamic sects that emerged in their time, and the absurdities of the ancient philosophers with Greek origin. In these books there is nothing to deny the many innovations emerging in our century and the deviances of modern sensualist philosophy, which must be precisely eliminated in order to preserve religious principles. For the science of *kalām* must be arranged in accordance with the condition and location. These have led me to write such a booklet in the atmosphere of education and discussion.”[79]

In his treatise *entitled New Creeds* (*Yeni Akāid*), Ahmad Hilmi of Filibe states that people of every period have a mentality, and therefore it is not possible for today's people to be satisfied or convinced by the logic and knowledge of the previous times. According to him, the Islamic society needs a major revolution of thought and a serious renewal. This will be done by analyzing the intellectual outputs of the old, preferring the ones that are righteous and beneficial, abandoning the harmful ones to the society, changing the ones which are not suitable for morality and progress. Also, when it comes to the new jurisprudences, this will be done through taking inspiration from the science of time and the needs of the environment.[80]

All these demands of the late Ottoman theologians to revise the *kalām* have not only remained as an individual wish, but have been transformed into the official policy of the Ottoman State. In this context, Ismail Hakkı İzmirli was assigned to be the president of the councils, which were founded in 1915, in order to re-examine and shape the science of *kalām* in accordance with the needs of the age. He was also charged with writing a book to modernize the *kalām* by the state.[81]

In the foreword of new *kalām*, written in fulfilment of this duty, İzmirli states that the modern [Turkish] theologians should abandon the principles of the philosophy of Aristotle because of the fact that

[77] Musa Kazım Efendi, *Külliyât,* 292-293.

[78] Regarding his life and works see. Metin Yurdagür, “Abdüllatif Harpûtî”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1997), 16: 237.

[79] Abdüllatif Harputî, *Tenkihu'l-kelâm fî Akâid-i Ehli'l-İslâm* (İstanbul: Necmi-i İstikbâl Matbaası 1327/1909), 4-5, 20.

[80] Filibeli explains that in the science of *kalām*, it is a necessity to have regard to the philosophical movements of the period lived in through a hypothesis. According to him, in a possible debate that can occur between a young person, who adopts materialism, and a religious official, this young person cannot be convinced by this religious official by only means of the Qur’an verses and hadiths. In this case, it is necessary to refer to *kalām* by giving the aforementioned debate a logical and philosophical direction. See. Filibeli, *Allah’ı İnkâr Mümkün Müdür?*, (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı İslamiyesi 1327).

[81] İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 56.

this philosophy, adopted by the theologians of late period, lost its validity for the last three centuries. He says that they instead should examine the views of contemporary Western philosophers, and accept the views complying with Islam and reject the ones that do not. According to him, the preliminaries and means of *kalām* may change accordingly considering the needs of the age. In order to prove that the universe originated in time, the *mutakallimūn* regarded some propositions such as “bodies are composed of indivisible parts” as a preliminary (*mabda’*). The fact that universe is originated temporally was also a preliminary or a mean in proving the Creator. These preliminaries may change, and more preliminaries can be put forward. For example, accepted by a number of philosophers today, the proposition that “The laws of nature are contingent, not necessary because they are proven by experience” can be a basis for the possibility of sensual miracle.[82] According to İzmirli, the preliminaries in the *kalām* of the previous scholars were different from the ones in the *kalām* of the following period theologians. In the new *kalām* period, the preliminaries will be also different. As a result of the necessity of grounding and defending the principles of faith, the preliminaries (*mabādi’)* and means (*wasā’il*) of *kalām* based on reason change with the change of its enemies, stubborn people and the people who are intended to be enlightened, and it is renewed in line with the requirements of the current age. However, the main topics (*masā’il*) and purposes (*maqāṣıd*) are unchangeable based on revelation.[83]

Abdüllûtif Harpûtî defines the red lines of new *kalām*, which do not change in relation to the society and the century, as preservation of the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and Islamic creeds (*ʿaqāʾid*) including the beliefs such as the followings: The creator of the universe, God exists and possesses the attributes of excellence. God is excluded from any deficiencies, the only being to be worshiped in the universe. Also, the revelation, prophecy, death and resurrection, award and punishment, and afterlife are true and established. According to Harpûtî, if any of these principles, which constitute the basis of the *kalām*,

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82 See. İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 7-8. İzmirli, in his second article on the new *kalām* project in *Sebîlürreşâd*, states that he wrote *The New Kalām* (*Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*) because he felt the need to enlighten the youth whose minds are full of philosophical ideas and to firmly establish the dogma in their hearts: “Yes, it is a necessary reality to enlighten the youth. Because I have been teaching for 30 years, I know how to enlighten the youth. Today, youth’s mind is filled with philosophical concepts. Is it malign, shameful, unlawful, or unreasonable to benefit from philosophical theories in an efficacious way, and from French philosophers such as Boutroux and Bergson in brief concerning the sensuous miracles, and to propound the theories of *kalām*, which provides a capacity leaving no need for logic, when it is needed İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, "Yeni İlm-i Kelâm Hakkında II", *Sebîlürreşâd*, 22 (1342), nr. 551-552/40. On this issue also see. Adnan Bülent Baloğlu, “İzmirli İsmail Hakkı’nın “Yeni İlm-i Kelâm” Anlayışı”, *İzmirli İsmail Hakkı* (Sempozyum 24-25 Kasım 1995) ed. Mehmet Şeker, Adnan Bülent Baloğlu (Ankara. TDV Yayınları, 1996), 101.

83 İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, in his article titled “Yeni İlm-i Kelâm”, in *Sebîlürreşâd*, says the following: “Contemporary science mends the conditions of the proofs used in the science of *kalām* and expands them [those proofs]. The the preliminaries (*mabādi’*) and means (*wasā’il*) of *kalām* change in relation to the needs of century. As the opponent and adversary become different, *kalām*’s form of defense also changes. However, principles of *kalām* never changes, the essential principles of faith (*akaid-i asliyye*) are secure from alteration.” See. “Yeni İlm-i Kelâm Hakkında II”, nr.528-529/59.

are not protected and preserved, then these creeds are no longer the creeds of Islam since it is regarded as blasphemy in religion to lose any of these principles."[84]

The new *kalām* scholars' distinction between changing and unchanging principles while trying to revise the *kalām* reminds us the distinction that classical period *mutakallimūn* made between *jalīl al- kalām* and *daqīq al-kalām*. They also referred to the faith principles such as God's existence, unity, revelation, prophecy as *jalīl* (major) subjects and regarded the theory of knowledge, and physical and philosophical issues, which they used to prove and defend such principles, as *daqīq* (subtle) subjects.[85] Concerning the distinction between *jalīl al- kalām* and *daqīq al-kalām*, we have to draw attention to the fact that the relationship between these two spheres was not one-sided in the past, and theological issues and the subjects of physics and philosophy, which are used to prove and defend these issues, bring about a certain degree of adaptation and integration. For example, the *mutakallimūn* of classical period included atomism in *kalām*, while the *mutakallimūn* of post classical period added the Aristotelian logic. However, the grounding of the theological principles on the subjects of physics and philosophy in this way has led to the fact that theological issues in detail are influenced by philosophical issues. In the case of atomism, for example, this theory has influenced the formation of theories such as the rejection of natural causality and the theory of continuous recreation (i.e., occasionalism).[86]

There seems to be no complete alliance between the late Ottoman theologians on how the new *kalām* should be related to modern philosophy and science. It should be noted that their relationship with modern science and philosophy is about recognition rather than integration and adaptation. However, while the new *kalām* aimed by İzmirli includes the spirituality-based new philosophy, it does not directly address the issues related to natural sciences and astronomy, but indirectly includes these issues by examining their consequences and laws.[87] On the other hand, M. Şerafeddin Yaltkaya's "social *kalām*" (*ictimai ilm-i kelâm*) project argues that the renewal of the science of *kalām* should be primarily based on sociology rather than on modern science and philosophy.[88]

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84 Abdullâtif Harputî, *Tekmile-i Tenkihu'l Kelâm* (İstanbul: Necm-i istikbal Matbaası, 1328), 146.

85 Mehmet Bulğen, "Klasik Dönem Kelâmında Dakiku'l-Kelâmın Yeri ve Rolü", *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 33 (2015): 39-72.

86 Mehmet Bulğen, *Kelam Atomculuğu ve Modern Kozmoloji* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2015), 8.

87 On this issue, İzmirli says the following: "Created and generated things are not the primary object of the science of kalām, rather because they are the effects of the power and wisdom by being instruments to reach the existence of God, who is Living, Omnipotent, Independent (Qayyum), Omniscient and Sovereign, and because the variety of created and generated things signify the omnipotence of God and His Godhead, they are going to be included in the kalām directly as long as the natural sciences and cosmography remains in this arena, and they will never be associated with kalām in any other way. İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Muhassalu'l-Kelâm ve'l-hikme* (İstanbul 1927), 16.

88 Regarding this issue see. M. Sait Özervarlı, "Son Dönem Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Arayışlar: Mehmed Şerafeddin'in 'İctimâî İlm-i Kelâm'ı", *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3 (1999): 157 – 170; Ramazan Altıntaş, "Sosyal Kelâm'a Giriş: "M. Şerafeddin Yaltkaya Örneği", *Kelâmın İşlevselliği ve Günümüz Kelâm Problemleri* (İzmir: İzmir İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2000), 129-149.

4. THE NEW KALĀM SCHOLARS' CRITICISMS OF MATERIALISM IN LATE OTTOMAN THOUGHT

It is necessary to give information about the attitudes of new *kalām* scholars to the modern science and philosophy before revealing their criticism of materialism. They adopt a general approach that can be expressed as "modernization that does not contradict the traditions and values of the Ottoman society" as against those who argue in favor of embracing Western culture and civilization as it is, and advocate revolution and modernization in any field including religion, too.[89] In this context, they consider the modernization in the field of science and technology necessary to compete with Europe and to survive in the modern period, but they oppose the blind reception of the Western culture and civilization as a whole.

New *kalām* scholars who approach the scientific knowledge in a positive way think that the new vision of universe emerged by discoveries in modern sciences such as physics, astronomy, biology and so on is a gain of humanity and it must be benefited from.[90] According to them, science provides objective and accurate information about the nature through experiments and observations. For this reason, a piece of information, which is certain that it comes from the prophet, and a proven scientific fact does not contradict each other. If there is a conflict in sight, this is either because the observations and experiments are faulty or the meaning of the related verse has been misunderstood. If the scientific knowledge is certain, the news coming from the prophet must be interpreted (*taʾwīl*) accordingly.[91] They also argue that the Quran is not a book of science, but it was sent to help people find the true path. However, in the case of a correspondence between a new scientific discovery and the verses of the Quran, they do not refrain from showing this as proof of the inimitability of the Qurʾan (*iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*) in the context of scientific exegesis.[92]

While criticizing materialism, the new *kalām* scholars primarily felt the need to first introduce the philosophical currents of the period such as idealism, realism and spiritualism, as well as the latest scientific developments in the fields of physics and astronomy. While doing this, they often referred to the views of the classical period *mutakallimūn*, and made an analogy between them. Thus, they aim to make the preliminaries (*mabādi'*) and the means (*wasā'il*) of *kalām*, which they use in explaining and advocating religious principles, philosophically and scientifically up-to-date. In this direction, while Abdullatif Harpûti and Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen added new chapters on modern astronomy in their books[93], İsmail Hakkı İzmirli

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89 M. Sait Özervarlı, "Şehbenderzâde Ahmed Hilmi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 38: 425.

90 Their positive attitude towards modern science and their eagerness to accept the scientific knowledge has been subject to criticism of contemporary researchers. For example, M. Sait Özervarlı criticizes new kalām scholars for adopting the scientific theories without recognizing the worldview that is behind them. See. M. Sait Özervarlı, "Son Dönem Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Arayışlar: Mehmed Şerafeddin'in 'İctimâî İlm-i Kelâm'ı", 158.

91 On this issue see. Mehmet Bulğen, "Son Dönem Osmanlı Kelâmcılarının Kevnî Âyetleri Yorumlama Yöntemleri Üzerine: Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen Örneği", *Kelam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13/1 (2015): 85.

92 On this issue, for example see. Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm* (İstanbul: Evkâf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası, 1339-1342), 390.

93 This section at the end of Abdüllâtif Harpûtî's book named *Tenkîhu'l-Kelâm fi Akaidi Ehli'l-İslâm*, is simplified under the title "Astronomi ve Din" and published by Bekir Topaloğlu. See. *Diyanet İlmi Dergi* [Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı

and Ahmad Hilmi of Filibe, in their books, refer to the latest scientific developments about the matter and energy revealed to the light by science, physics and chemistry. The intense engagement of the new theologians with modern science and philosophy for the sake of updating the *wasā’il* and *mabādi’* allowed them to outshine their rivals in following the movements of modern science and philosophy closely and thoroughly.[94]

The new *kalām* scholars have primarily aimed at the epistemology of materialism while criticizing this theory. The problem with Ottoman materialists, according to them, is that they put too much emphasis on senses -under the influence of positivism-, and do not value the means of acquiring knowledge other than experience. Shaykh al-Islām Mustafa Sabri states that such an assumption would require denial of sciences based on mental inferences, such as logic and mathematics.[95] Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen argues that something that cannot be perceived by sensation and experience cannot be ignored, or else this will require the rejection of many things, which are not seen but exist doubtfully. Besides, different causes may prevent the perception of something.[96]

İsmail Hakkı İzmirli draws attention to the segmental character of the theories of knowledge adopted by philosophical movements in that era. While some philosophers consider senses only, some consider reason together with senses as the cause of knowledge. Some of them regard mind alone, and some only accept intuition (inspiration) beyond senses and mind as the actual means of obtaining knowledge. At this point, İzmirli points out to the power of the theory of knowledge based on pluralism. According to him, where experience and reasoning is not enough, revelation is also a source of valid information. The ideal way to obtain truth and true knowledge is the way of religion based on the mind, the senses, the intuition, and the revelation. [97]

Dergisi] 13/6 (1974): 343-361; also see. Bekir Topaloğlu, *Kelâm İlmi: Giriş* Ekler chapter; also see. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 384 ff.

94 İlhan Kutluer, “Batılılaşma”, *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1992), 5: 156. Meral Yıldırım, “Son Dönem Osmanlı Aydınlarının Meteryalizme Dair Eleştirileri”, 7.

95 Mustafa Sabri, *Mawqif al'Aql wa al'Ilm wa al'Alam min Rab al'Alamin* (Beirut: Dâr al-İhyâi al-Turâsi al-Arabî, 1921), 2:77-78, 3:63; also see. Rabiye Çetin, “Tanzimat'tan Günümüze Kelam'ı Yenileme Çalışmaları I”, *Dinî Araştırmalar*, 16/42 (2013): 25.

96 For example, Bilmen says the following with reference to whether “seven level skies” exist or not: People who reduces the causes of science to only sense and experience cannot say that “skies exist” because they cannot see them. However, neither can they say “skies do not exist” because this is not within their abstract sense and experience. For not being able to see and discover such a thing does not entail its non-existence; this is an apodictic proposition. It is possible that the limitless width of the space or the transparency of the skies or other atmospheric causes prevent us from seeing the skies. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 385.

97 İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, I, 46-47. The criticism of the New *kalām* theologians towards materialists because they base the means of acquiring knowledge on senses, and their demand for intuition to be also accepted as a means of acquiring knowledge indicate a deviation from the classical period *kalām* in terms of epistemology. For the classical period *mutakallimūn*, even though they adopted a multifaceted approach to the means of acquiring knowledge,

In addition, the new *kalām* scholars called attention to some epistemological inconsistencies of materialists. According to them, materialists, on the one hand, regarded observation and experimentation as the only way to obtain knowledge, while rejecting all kinds of metaphysical knowledge, including religion and high philosophy (metaphysic), on the other hand, they themselves construct a dogmatic metaphysics under the guise of being scientific.[98] From a positivist perspective, materialism contains speculative claims about matter and force that cannot be verified and falsified.[99] For example, materialists' assertions that matter and force are eternal and limitless are metaphysical claims whose accuracy cannot be tested by observation and experimentation, and that have no scientific basis. While materialists say that matter is ubiquitous, they have not reached this knowledge by encircling and experiencing the entire universe.[100]

It seems to be admissible that the scholars of the new *kalām* criticize materialism saying that it is a philosophy under a scientific guise because Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the founder of positivism, in his *The Positive Philosophy* (1844), advocates a purely experience-based method for gaining knowledge and even excludes the indirect observation methods. According to him, for example, mankind will never know the question of, "What is the sun and other stars made of?" in the future because it is necessary to go there and experience it personally. However, Augusto Comte says, "Humanity will never know what the Sun is made of" since it is not possible to go to the Sun.[101] On the contrary, materialists do not have any experimental evidence, but they generalize not only about the world and the solar system, but about the formation and nature of the universe as a whole.[102]

In addition, the new *kalām* scholars state that the materialists are based on obsolete views concerning matter and force, and that the claim that matter is the fundamental principle, and the basis of everything contradicts the theories put forward by science lately. For example, İzmirli says that it is no longer possible

prioritized senses. Moreover, the classical period theologians did not regard intuition or inspiration as valid means of knowledge acquisition. See Mehmet Bulğen, *Kelam Atomculuğu ve Modern Kozmoloji*, 215.

98 Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti*, 6,7.

99 For example, Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen says the following on this issue: "Materialists believe that the claims that are not based on sense and experience and that are not attached to a proof are not worthy of attention. How are they then convinced about the existence, movement and shaking of a thing that is not possible to be seen by any means, and about the formation of the universe in this way? Is there not a contradiction between this opinion of them and their claims? See*. Muvazzah İlm-i kelâm*, 134.

100 Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti,* 50-51.

101 Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy,* trans. to English Harriet Martineau (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1: 132.

102 It is possible to reduce this issue to the discussion regarding that to what extent cosmology, which is a science concerning the emergence, development, and operation of the universe, is a science. For example, according to David Hume, experimentation and observation is the only credible source to test the trueness of the phenomena and events. Because it is not possible to go outside of the universe and make observations on it or have an experience about its creation, we cannot say anything about the whole universe based on the phenomena and events we perceive in our world. See. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Edinburg and London: William Blackwood, 1907), 40 ff.

to maintain that the source of everything is the eternal and perpetual matter since the matter has lost its importance in the new physics and it is replaced by the energy.[103] Ahmed Hilmi of Filibe and Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, referring to Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932), one of the famous German chemists of the time, suggested that the concept of matter was introduced when the notion of ‘energy’ was not known. However, they state that the new physics revealed the fact that the qualities used to describe and understand the matter are actually properties of energy. Since these properties belong to energy, there is nothing left to be called “matter.”[104]

Although the claims of İzmirli, Filibeli and Bilmen that the matter could be destroyed and transformed into energy and therefore materialism lost its validity were influential at their times, but today these are no longer relevant claims against materialism. Arising as early as the beginning of the last century, the notions like radioactivity, the transformation, entropy, forces, fields, dark matter, black energy, etc. have revealed brand-new facts that could not be explained by the traditional materialist conception of matter. In addition, Quantum Mechanics and Relativity Theory allowed alternative interpretations to the mechanistic and deterministic universe understanding in the Newtonian and Laplacian sense, on which materialism grounded.[105] However, all of this led to the evolution of materialism into physicalism in itself rather than the disappearance of it. Although the 20th century physics reveals concepts and theories different from the traditional understanding of matter, these are still the phenomena and processes that are put forward under the roof of physics. Therefore, the fact that matter transforms into energy does not mean the end of materialism, but on the contrary, it provides the development of physicalism, which claims that everything in the universe, including thought and consciousness, is physical.

On the other hand, the new *kalām* scholars have also made criticisms against physicalism. Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, for example, draws attention to the drawbacks of metaphysics made with the claim of being scientific depending on the changing nature of the comprehensive cosmological models and theories. According to him, the science of cosmology (*‘ilm al-takwīn*) has not been able to encompass the physical reality and has not had the last word about the functioning of the universe. On the contrary, cosmological theories are constantly changing, [for example] once the theory of Ptolemy was accepted as truth, and then Copernicus’ theory (1473-1543) replaced it. Nowadays, astronomical science is on the eve of a great revolution with a new theory (the theory of relativity) advanced by Einstein (1879-1955). There is no guarantee that this theory will not be invalid tomorrow. Thus, according to Bilmen, there is no need to refuse a truth proven by religious dogma (*nass*), or to interpret them arbitrarily so as to conform to some scientific theories that change constantly.[106] İzmirli states that materialists have established general rules based on some constantly changing theories. He tries to support this criticism by relying on the work of

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[103] İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm,* 1: 283.

[104] They try to base the fact that matter is destroyable and convertible to energy on the newly discovered fact, that is, radioactive decay at that time. See. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *ibid.*, 52; Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 138.

[105] H. Meyer, “Materialism”, 318.

[106] Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 386.

Henri Poincaré (1854-1912) and Émile Boutroux (1845-1921) with the view that there is relativity, even in things that are definitely accepted.[107]

Ahmad Hilmi of Filibe states that the science progresses through hypotheses and it takes time to verify or falsify these hypotheses. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about absolute accuracy of the hypotheses. Materialism is also based on a hypothesis that must be evaluated in this context, and today's accumulation of scientific knowledge falsifies this hypothesis. In addition, science will never be able to have the last word about the universe because scientific research will never end. It is therefore necessary to be cautious when putting forward the claim of having found the final theory. Even the theories accepted as unchanging principles (e.g. Newtonian mechanics) have been shaken today. There has not been a single scientific knowledge which has not changed and has not lost its value in the relatively-known seven or eight thousand years of history of humanity. Although they are tried to be presented as scientific truths by some, materialist theories are now seen as obsolete ideas in Europe. Therefore, according to him (Ahmed Hilmi), metaphysics made based on physics whose theories are constantly changing and doubtful contains troubles.[108]

The new *kalām* scholars devote a great part of their efforts to refute the idea of materialists that matter, energy, and movement are eternal.[109] They attempted to reject the idea that the universe and movement are eternal by justifying the second law of thermodynamics (entropy) speculating that the universe is going through a “heat death” step by step. According to them, the entropy law not only shows that the movement and chemical reactions in the universe will end, but also entails that the universe was created in a finite time in the past.[110] M. Şemseddin Günaltay, on the other hand, claims that all the theories put forward with the claim of explaining the universe cannot go beyond an assumption unless they are based on a creator or necessary being (*wâjib al-wujûd*). He tries to lay this claim on two basic theories, which were prominent at the time, about the functioning of the world. The first one is mechanism and the latter is dynamism. Mechanism explains everything through the composition and decomposition of the atoms, which are accepted to be eternal and perpetual. According to this theory, the events taking place in the universe are nothing more than the results of the mechanical movements of atoms, which are continually converging and dissociating. Dynamism tries to reduce everything to power, that is energy. The universe is the result of either the mutual or harmonious forces (energy) or just one force that creates the things by

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[107] İzmirli, *Yeni ilm-i Kelâm*, I, 242-243.

[108] Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti*, 78-80 ff.; Also see. Özervarlı, “Şehbenderzâde Ahmed Hilmi”, 17, 426.

[109] For example, see. İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 284 ff. İsmail Hakkı states that materialists accept three apodictic propositions in explaining the world: 1) There are limitless atoms. 2) These atoms are eternal. 3) They are essentially in motion. According to İzmirli, the developments in the science of physics have rendered these three principles invalid. For based on physics, moving objects try to find balance and they are inclined to rest. If the world is not in rest now, this shows that its movement is not eternal. For the time that has passed since eternity would be naturally different than the time needed for balance. İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 2: 67; also see. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 126-127.

[110] Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Huzur-ı Akl-ı Fende Mâddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti*, 16, 76-81, 91; also see. İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelam*, 2: 67; Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 138.

means of continuous motion. According to Günaltay, the explanation of the things and events with these two theories is a secondary analysis. Examining the matter itself in terms of mechanism and the force itself in terms of dynamism, the necessity of existence of a creator, with regard to the question “What is origin of these?”, cannot be denied.[111] In this context, Günaltay says that it is possible to explain the formation of the universe with Kant-Laplace theory as long as it is based on a creative god. According to this theory, a long time ago before the formation of the universe, everything was in the form of a gas cloud. The solid, liquid and gaseous materials available now consisted of a homogeneous gas mass. This matter that was extremely light, was in a very high temperature. The universe consisting of millions of stars arose from the rotating movement of this mass of gas. As a result of the condensation of the gas mass, emerged a gravity force through the center. Also, a centrifugal force occurred caused by its turning around its own axis. Since the rotation of the gas mass constantly gained speed, a number of parts broken off of it. These pieces became a luminous cloud (nebula) by the gravity of rotation. The gravity of the rotation gradually intensified these and began to become a central force. A cosmos was established with centrifugal and centripetal forces of each nebulous. Here, our solar system is one of the compositions that are formed in this way.[112]

According to Günaltay, the current theory explaining the formation of the universe cannot go beyond speculation. For it claims that the entire space was in the form of a gas cloud at the beginning of the formation of the universe, but remains silent about the source of the gas cloud. However, it is not possible to envisage anything without considering its source. In the same way, the aforementioned explanations will remain unfounded unless it is accepted that there is a creative god who creates the mass of gas and gives it the first movement.[113] Günaltay's method for proving God by using the Kant-Laplace theory is widely used by theists in the context of the Big Bang theory (Kalām Cosmological Argument).[114]

One of the important issues in materialism discussions is the theory of evolution. As is known, this theory, developed by the British naturalist Charles Darwin, holds that all species and organisms emerged and evolved from a single species through natural selection. This rendered God's volitional intervention unnecessary in any ring of the creation chain, including the existence of man. For this reason, the theory of evolution has been perceived by materialists as a challenge to the theory of creation since its emergence and has been accepted as one of the main references in rejecting divine religions.

The noteworthy aspect of the new *kalām* scholars is that they try to reconcile the creation theory of Islam with evolution instead of directly opposing this theory. In this respect, first of all, they say that the theory of evolution is not something new, and that such views have been advocated for a long time both in ancient philosophy and in Islamic thought in various ways. However, the fact that the previous philosophers

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[111] M. Şemşeddin Günaltay, *Felsefe-i Ulâ* (İstanbul: Evkaf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası, 1339-1341), 66; on this issue also see. Neşet Doku, *Türkiye’de Anti-Materyalist Felsefe*, 261.

[112] Günaltay, *Felsefe-i Ulâ*, 535-536

[113] Günaltay, *Felsefe-i Ulâ*, 535-536.

[114] Enis Doko, “Öncesi ve Sonrasıyla Big Bang”, *Güncel Kelâm Tartışmaları*, ed. Mehmet Bulğen, Enis Doko (İstanbul: İFAV 2014), 219 ff.

and thinkers accepted evolution did not require them to deny the existence of God and the spirit besides man's material body.[115]

While the new *kalām* scholars recognize that there is a general evolution in the universe, they have firmly opposed an evolutionary approach indicating that man is derived from an ancestor identical to monkey. For instance, according to Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, the existence of an evolutionary law in the universe can be accepted. However, the problematic issue is the misinterpretation of this law. For him, evolution is not in the manner that animal is derived from plant and human is derived from animal, but in the form of the change and transformation of the beings through their inner dynamics and among their own species throughout their lives. The process of transformation of fetus in the womb into a child and then into an adult person is an example of this. However, there is no evolution that makes it possible to switch between species in the way that the animal is derived from the plant and the human is derived from the animal.[116]

Bilmen says that advocates of the evolution theory do not have definitive scientific data on how life came into being from the inanimate matter in the past or on that they came to earth from various stars. According to him, many of the ideas of materialists about evolution are based on disputable arguments. Conversely, scientific studies conducted by Pastor (1822-1895) reject the possibility that life could emerge from inanimate beings. According to Bilmen, the real problem of materialists such as Ernst Haeckel is that they regard Darwin's theory as an indisputable scientific truth. However, they are trying to invent intermediate species, which have not been established with precise scientific data, to complete the chain of evolution:

"Ernst Haeckel talks about the animals he invented in his mind for the purpose of replenishing the means in the human ancestry chain, and tries to describe their circles flawlessly as if he saw these animals and lived with them some time! However, geology, the science of living creatures, does not record such an animal. I wonder if how Haeckel acquainted himself with this kind of truth? Does he not have to prove his definitive statement in this context? Yes, he is. But is it possible? ... Never!"[117]

As is seen, Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen claims that the cross-species claim of theory of evolution consists of speculative claims that could not be based on observation and experimentation. Hence, according to him, there is no need to revise/interpret (*taʾwīl*) the Quranic verses on this subject. On the contrary, science has strong data that there is no transition among species.[118]

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[115] On this issue see. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 207.

[116] Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 210.

[117] Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 216.

[118] Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1954), one of the late period Ottoman Shaykh al-Islams, also states that theory of evolution is not established based on a certain scientific evidence, therefore, it is not necessary to interpret Qur'an verses in this regard as long as this theory is not certainly proved. According to him, while even Christian clergy absolutely object to the probability of human's being driven from ape because it is opposing to Torah and declare the defenders of this theory unbelievers, it is saddening that some Muslim scholars are doubtful about denying

Finally, we should specify that one of the important debates between the new *kalām* scholars and materialists is on the nature of the spirit (*rūh*). In this context, the majority of late Ottoman theologians, including İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, Abdüllatif Harpûtî, Ahmed Hilmi of Filibe and M. Şemseddin Günaltay, seem to have embraced the dualist human theory in the form of material body and non-extended spirit.[119] While they criticize the materialists about the existence of a spirit separate from the material body, they benefit from the spiritualist philosophy of the period.[120] However, the new *kalām* scholars are also aware of the fact that the real nature of the spirit and whether it has an independent existence separate from the body cannot be known for sure. In this respect, they say that the nature of the spirit, whether it is material/immaterial or not is accidental, and that this problem does not concern the dogma and truth the essentials of religion (*zarurât-ı diniyye*).[121] For example, İzmirli states that the existence and nature of the spirit is a complex and difficult problem to solve, so people have conflicted on this issue throughout the history. For him, however, there are essentially two opposing views on spirit: These are the materialist view which reduces the spirit to the matter and considers it to be a quality of matter, and spiritualistic view that regards spirit as an abstract or immaterial substance different from the body. [122]

such probability. Moreover, this theory includes elements that are incompatible to Quran more than to Torah. Mustafa Sabri, *İnsan ve Kader*, trans. İsa Doğan. (İstanbul: Kültür Basın Yayın Birliği, 1989), 18 ff.

119 For example, Ömer Nasûhi explains this point as follows: “Human is a creature consisting of one body and one spirit (reasoning soul). However, the true meaning of human is made up of soul that is described as “I” and that always preserves its sameness, and that is a godly elegance. Body which is subject to a constant change and alteration is nothing more than a manifestation tool for the spiritual impressions just as an instrument of soul (cognizance, volition, sensibility. *Muvazzah Ilm-i Kelâm*, 341; also see. İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 292.

120 However, we must draw attention to this point that new *kalām* scholars did not take the dualist human concept from Descartes, who says that human consists of two substances as matter and soul or from the European spiritualists, but rather they took it from the late period mutakallims such as Ghazalī and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. For example, see. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 377.

121 Ömer Nasûhi Bilmen, *Muvazzah Ilm-i Kelâm*, 341; There has been a conflict on the questions: Does soul has an independent existence separate from essence and matter? Is it possible to perceive the essence of soul? Is soul going to perish after death or is it going to be continuous? These are some significant questions that they have occupied intellectuals’ minds for a long time. However, the issues regarding the essence of soul and whether it is material or not are subsidiary issues to the dogma. They are not counted among the essentials of religion. *ibid.,* 370. For a similar view see. İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 300.

122 Şemseddin Günaltay has similar views on this issue with İzmirli. He divides the views people have adopted on the issue of spirit into four groups: 1) Materialism, which does not accept separate existence of soul from body and regards it as a product of body, 2) Idealism, which considers thought to be the only truth and reduces everything to it, 3) Pantheism, which sees soul as a manifestation of absolute existence just as matter, 4) Spiritualism, which accepts soul as a substance independent of matter. Şemseddin Günaltay states that he adopts the dualist spiritualist view, which defends spirit-matter dualism. For according to him, the fact that psychological and physiological incidents cannot be converted to each other shows that their sources are different. In the opinion of him, even though science can explain material events, it has yet to show the conversion of movement to consciousness See. *Felsefe-i Ula*, 177-180, 505-507.

İzmirli states that he is closer to spiritualist view regarding that the spirit is a non-extended substance although he says the classical period *mutakallimūn* have similar views as contemporary materialists about spirit.[123] In this context, he criticizes the attempt of materialists to explain the spiritual states such as emotion, will, thought and belief with the functions of brain (mind). Although he accepts the relation between the states of mind and brain, for him, the real cause for the states of mind is not the brain. As a matter of fact, if a musician does not have a musical instrument or if this instrument is corrupted, it is not possible for him to produce a harmonious music. Undoubtedly, the musical instrument is a necessary condition for the emergence of a harmonious music, but not a sufficient condition. The mind is like a musical instrument, and the one who uses it is actually the spirit. The approach of materialists, which reduces everything to physiology, is not sufficient to explain the issue.[124]

In addition to this, İzmirli criticizes the view, defended by the classical period *mutakallimūn* and materialists, that the human and animal, are of the same genus (homogeneous) in nature.[125] According to him, there is a difference between man and animal not only in terms of rank, but also in terms of quality. While the human is a reasonable and intelligent being, the animal is not like this. Human beings are composed of two physical and spiritual elements: body and spirit. The spiritual element is the cause of the states of mind and the material element is the cause of the physical body. There is an undeniable affinity between these two elements.[126]

The new *kalām* thinkers' adoption of the dualistic human view has led them to show interest to spiritualist philosophy and to see this movement closer to themselves. In this context, while Ismail Hakkı İzmirli says that spiritualism is more suitable for Islam,[127] Filibeli also sympathizes with this movement by claiming that spiritualism has improved itself very recently.[128] Harpûtî means the spiritualist philosophy of the time when he is arguing that new *kalām* thinkers must prove the existence of a realm of meaning, an abstract realm and a realm of spirits beyond the matter and material realm by the methods and principles of its current philosophy.[129] Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, on the other hand, makes a more cautious approach to the

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[123] İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 263.

[124] İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Muhtasar Felsef-i Ulâ* (İstanbul: Hukuk Matbaası, 1329), 146-148.

[125] İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 263.

[126] İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 292; on this issue also see. Neşet Toku, *Türkiye'de Anti-Materyalist Felsefe*, 242.

[127] İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, 1: 290.

[128] However, we have to indicate that the spiritualism in Filibeli's mind is different from the spiritualism that emerged in Europe in 18th century in parallel to materialism and that attempts to develop an alternative concept of god and universe, and theory of knowledge. He counts the main principles of spiritualism as follows: 1) God has intelligence and volition. 2) God created the universe out of nothing and there is a difference between Him and creatures in terms of existence. 3) There is a capacity in human mind called "intelligence and distinction" that God and the truth of the things are known through it. 4) Human has freedom of will. See. Şehbenderzâde Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, "Hangi Felsefî Ekolü Kabul Etmeliyiz", 20-21.

[129] Harputî, *Tekmile-i Tenkihu'l Kelâm,* 113.

claim that some spiritualists can take photographs of the souls and prove their existence scientifically, although he accepts that spiritual philosophy has recently overwhelmed materialism.[130]

The fact that *kalām* thinkers did not try to explain the cognitive characteristics of the human being with the neurophysiological characteristics of the brain, but grounding their clarification on the spirit, whose nature is unknown, prevented them from adapting new scientific findings in the field of neuroscience to *kalām*. Moreover, this situation forced them to defend a view, which they did not claim as one of the principles of religion, in the face of the scientific data recently revealed. One of the powerful areas of materialism from the 18th century to the present day is the scientific findings uncovering that the cognitive and spiritual characteristics of human beings can be explained by physical processes. In this context, the discovery of neuronal functions and biochemical mechanisms has revealed strong scientific evidence indicating that man's psychological and cognitive characteristics can be based on physical processes.[131] Scientific data have brought to light that the characteristics of thought, feeling, knowing and will are operated by the nervous system, and they can be changed by various electrodes and drugs. Defective operation of the brain also causes mind and mental health to become defective. Nowadays, many of the work done by the mind can be performed electronically by sophisticated computers. These are not only limited to reminiscing, recalling and calculation, but also extend to the dimensions of recognition, estimation processes, problem solving, and learning new skills. This has led to the gradually spreading acceptance that mental activity, parallel with the claim of materialists, is a special type of physical processes.

In such an environment, the new *kalām* scholars could have made use of legacy of classical period atomist *mutakallimūn*, which emphasizes the matter and the bodily composition of man, rather than trying to explain the cognitive properties of humanity with an immaterial spirit and adopting the spiritualism. Such a preference would have prevented them from defending a matter that is not among the essentials of religion in the face of scientific data. Moreover, it would have made it easier for them to adapt the scientific findings in the field of neurophysiology to the new *kalām*, thus, it would have enabled them to fight against materialism more effectively. According to classical *mutakallimūn*, to claim that the universe, including man, consists entirely of matter, and to defend that everything in the universe occurs through physical processes within space-time context does not mean denying the Creator, on the contrary, it is a proof showing that the universe originated temporally.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, materialism, which is a naturalist worldview that reduces the existence as a whole to matter and its interactions, dates back to the beginning of philosophy, but in the historical process it has been a view in the minority and reacted against. However, this view started to find supporters again in

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[130] “Thank God, we do not need the theory of spiritualism or etc. to establish the existence of soul and we do not feel obligated to accept that the concept of spiritualism is a truth. However, we would like to say that some people, who did not want to believe anything other than sensibles before, afterwards went this far and considered the existence of souls among sensibles and a priori knowledge based on the spiritual examination they made.” See. Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm*, 372.

[131] Keith Campbell, “Materialism”, 19.

Europe following the spread of the deterministic and mechanistic understanding of the universe in the wake of the 17th-century science revolution and following the enlightenment and secularization movements. The introduction of materialism into the Ottoman State started through the students, who were sent to the West, and modern schools, which were opened from the first half of the 19th. At the beginning of the 20th century, materialism had influenced a considerable amount of the Ottoman intellectuals although it formed background arguments like secularism and Westernization.

The increasing influence of materialism in the Ottoman Empire after the Second Constitutional Era led the Ottoman scholars to look for ways to combat such thought currents in a more systematic way. At this point, the attention has turned into *kalām*, which has traditionally had the task of defending the Islamic faith. However, in its present state, *kalām* was not seen as sufficient to fight against modern movements. This situation has led Ottoman scholars to the idea that the science of *kalām* should be revised according to the needs of the age. This view was later officially adopted by the Ottoman State and transformed into a project called "The New Science of Kalām". This project was based on the principle that *kalām* has subjects that both constitute the roots of religion (*masā'il/maqāṣıd*) which are mainly based on revelation, and represent the means and preliminaries (*mabādi' /wasā'il*) which are used to prove and defend them, based on reason. In this distinction, while the issues, which constitute the revelation dimension of the *kalām*, remain always the same, the means, forming rather scientific and philosophical dimension of it, change depending on time and conditions.

In the axis of this project, while criticizing materialism, new *kalām* scholars first tried to be acquainted with the accumulation of philosophical and scientific knowledge that emerged in Europe in the last three centuries, and to make the aspects of them, compatible with the Islamic religion, means of *kalām*. This approach enabled them to criticize materialism using the philosophy and science of the era. While criticizing the materialism, the new *kalām* scholars tried to demonstrate that it is metaphysics under the guise of being scientific, and includes speculative judgments that cannot be verified and falsified. In addition, they rejected the views of materialists about the eternity of matter and force, and the mechanistic and deterministic foundations on which it was based through new scientific discoveries and theories, revealed by the scientific development of that era, such as the entropy, the transformation of matter into energy, radioactive decay, probability, and relativity.

As for the theory of evolution, the new *kalām* scholars tried to partially Islamize the theory rather than confront it directly. Accordingly, they first acknowledged that there is a general evolution in the universe, but they argue that this evolution is not between species. Their attempts to reconcile the theory of evolution with the theory of creation can be compared to the attitudes of the classical period *mutakallimūn* who Islamized atomism.

However, the new *kalām* scholars have not been able to maintain their attitude towards the theory of evolution about the scientific discoveries, made in the field of neurophysiology, concerning the psychological and mental nature of man. By adopting the view that human beings are composed of two different substances, namely matter and spirit, they did not recognize the explanation of cognitive characteristics such as consciousness, will, thought and knowledge by reducing them to matter and neurophysiological processes in the brain. Their dualist attitudes to the nature of humanity led them to take

interest in the spiritualistic philosophies of the time and to bring the *kalām* closer to spiritualism in terms of epistemological and ontological aspect.

As a result, materialism, which defines the physical universe as "everything that exists", is contrary to the philosophical movements such as idealism and spiritualism, and it also contradicts divine religions, which define the universe as "everything that exists except God". On the other hand, this does not mean that idealism or spiritualism is more suitable to the epistemology and ontology of divine religions. As we mentioned at the beginning of our article, the classical period *mutakallimūn* have a cosmology and epistemology that is closer to materialism rather than idealism and spiritualism. However, their character as stated in the way "seemingly materialist", does not mean to deny God, but rather serves an occasionalist worldview of theism in which the God-universe relation is established at the most advanced level.

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